CLAIMS:

1.   A method of generating a hash signal representative of a multimedia signal, the method comprising the steps of:

            receiving a bit-stream comprising a compressed multimedia signal;

            selectively reading from the bit-stream predetermined parameters; and

            deriving a hash function from said parameters.

2.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined parameters relate to perceptual information of the multimedia signal.

3.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the multimedia signal comprises at least one of an audio signal, a video signal and an image signal.

4.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the multimedia signal has been compressed using at least one of transform encoding, subband encoding and parametric encoding.

5.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined parameters relate to at least one of the energies of frequency bands; the amplitudes of frequency bands; the tonality of frequency bands; the luminance of an area of a video signal; and the chrominance of an area of a video signal.

6.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of analysing the received bit-stream in order to determine the decoding scheme used to compress the multimedia signal.

7.   A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein said analysing step comprises comparing the properties of the bit-stream with a database containing properties of a number of coding schemes.

8.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of selectively reading predetermined parameters comprises: locating said predetermined parameters within the bit-stream by using the syntax description;

            reading the located predetermined parameters; and

            decoding the predetermined parameter using the decoder description.

9.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined parameters relate to a first set of frequency bands, and wherein the step of deriving the hash function comprises deriving estimates of values of spectral information present in a second set of frequency bands from the predetermined parameters, the hash function subsequently being calculated from the estimated values.

10.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said multimedia signal is compressed using a parametric encoding scheme, and wherein the predetermined parameters relate to at least one of the sinusoidal components, the noise components and the transient components utilised within the parametric scheme.

11.   A computer program arranged to perform the method as claimed in claim 1.

12.   A record carrier comprising a computer program as claimed in claim 11.

13.   A method of making available for downloading a computer program as claimed in claim 11.

14.   A hash signal representative of a multimedia signal, the hash signal having been generated by selectively reading predetermined parameters relating to perceptual properties of the multimedia signal from a bit-stream comprising a compressed version of the multimedia signal.

15.   An apparatus arranged to generate a hash signal representative of a multimedia signal, the apparatus comprising:

            a receiver arranged to receive a bit-stream comprising a compressed multimedia signal;

a decoder (210) arranged to selectively read from the bit-stream predetermined

parameters;

a processing unit (270) arranged to derive a hash function from said

parameters.